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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000135

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF, AF/E AND INR/B  
PARIS/LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: ILLNESS AND EVACUATION OF DJIBOUTI'S MINISTER OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REF: RAGSDALE/GAREY E-MAILS 2/10/05

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA RAGSDALE.  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Djibouti's Foreign Minister Ali Abdi Farah suffered a stroke early morning of February 9. He was rushed to France's military hospital in Djibouti, Bouffard, where he was treated until his evacuation the evening of February 11 to Paris. According to French Ambassador Philippe Selz, Farah suffered a stroke which rendered him paralyzed on the left side of his body. Selz visited Farah in the hospital, and said that while the minister was conscious, it was not possible to understand his speech. He also said that doctors at Bouffard have told him that in their best estimate, individuals in a state similar to Farah's have required a minimum of eight weeks of rehabilitation and therapy. Post has heard other reports that Farah regained some sensation in his left foot and left hand, and these individuals expressed hope that the paralysis would be temporary. Farah is known to have had open heart surgery in the past but the heart was, according to Selz, not affected by the cerebral attack.

2. (U) Ambassador has conveyed a get-well message to Farah and urged (per reference) that a similar message from Secretary Rice be sent. Ambassador's message was as follows:

SIPDIS

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Begin text:

-  
His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdi Farah  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Djibouti

-  
Your Excellency:

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I am extremely sorry to learn of your sudden illness and hospitalization.

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On behalf of the United States Embassy in Djibouti, and in my name personally, I extend to you our sincere wishes for your swift and full recovery. We so much appreciate your fine service and liaison with all of us who are members of the diplomatic corps and look forward to your early return to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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My best regards to you.

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Sincerely,  
Marguerita D. Ragsdale  
Ambassador

-  
End text.

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3. (U) Embassy has proposed the following letter from Secretary Rice:

SIPDIS

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Begin draft text:

-  
His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdi Farah  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Djibouti

-  
Your Excellency:

-  
Ambassador Ragsdale has informed me of your sudden illness and hospitalization.

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Please know that my colleagues in the Department of State join me in wishing you an early recovery and swift return to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are very proud of the warm relationship and partnership we enjoy with the Republic of Djibouti, on many levels, and remain appreciative of your positive role. I look forward to meeting you personally and working with you to advance the objectives and goals our nations share.

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Sincerely,

Condoleeza Rice  
Secretary of State

SIPDIS

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End draft text.

14. (C) Bio-data: Farah has long been known as a heavy consumer of alcohol and user of khat and is a chain smoker. He reportedly gave up smoking four months ago. Farah is 58 years of age (born February 16, 1947) and is married with several children. In 1977, he became Deputy Secretary General of the Administrative Training Center in Djibouti, after receiving a diploma the same year from the Institute of Public Administration in Lyon, France. He was subsequently named a diplomatic advisor to the Cabinet of the President and later moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he was head of the Administrative and Consular Affairs Directorate. In September of 1980, he was assigned to Tunisia as the First Secretary of the Djiboutian Embassy. In 1995, he was named Minister of Industry and Mining by former President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, a position he held until Ismail Omar Guelleh was elected in 1999 and named him Minister of Foreign Affairs. Farah is an ethnic Somali of the Issak clan, a minority in Djibouti but a majority in neighboring Somaliland. He has the confidence of President Guelleh and is an integral part of Guelleh's tribal balancing act between ministries. He played a key role in engineering the Arta Conference for Somali Reconciliation and continues to dominate Djibouti's Somalia/Somaliland policies. He also organized the Conference in Djibouti on anti-personnel mines, which brought together countries of the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. He has described one of the objectives of his ministry as making the Republic of Djibouti a pole of attraction for foreign investment. Farah is amiable and has been well-disposed to the Embassy and close U.S.-Djibouti relations. Farah speaks French and Somali, with very limited competency in Arabic.

15. (C) Comment: President Guelleh reportedly visited Farah prior to Farah's evacuation and was deeply saddened by his condition. Besides his diplomatic function, Farah played a major role in the President's political party and was an advisor to Guelleh on party, parliamentary, and Somali matters. Farah was accompanied to Paris by his wife and other relatives. End comment.

RAGSDALE